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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

# NEWS

"We must open wider the doors of opportunity....  
for the good of our country and all our people"

President Eisenhower

U. S. Department of Agriculture



Washington, D. C.  
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Selection of pilot counties by Ohio and Wisconsin, further meetings of State Rural Development Committees, and stepped-up organization at the county level highlight recent State activity in the Rural Development Program. A total of 13 States have Rural Development Committees and there are now 37 pilot counties and trade areas, with more in the process of being designated.

North Carolina, County Organization Early in March, representatives of the State Rural Development Committee met with local leaders and agency representatives in the three pilot counties, Anson, Bertie, and Watauga. Enthusiasm was high, with more than 80 people attending each meeting. Steering committees have been organized to survey program needs and recommend permanent county leadership committees.

Ohio, Pilot County Named The State Rural Development Committee has selected Monroe County in southeastern Ohio as a demonstration county. Considerable progress has already been made in Monroe, including plans for industry expansion. Directed by local leaders, a detailed study has been started of economic, social, and cultural conditions in the county. Such factors as labor supply, transportation and communication, electric power, natural resources, population trends, and cultural and civic facilities will be reviewed. Howard Phillips, county agricultural extension agent, has responsibility for coordinating rural development work, and another assistant agent will be added to his staff.

Alabama, New Rural Development Committee The first meeting of the newly-formed Rural Development Committee was held February 14 in Montgomery. After discussing the objectives of a program, the group appointed a subcommittee to recommend one or two pilot counties. P. O. Davis, Director of Extension, is chairman of the committee.

Wisconsin, Resource Development County Price County, which is going forward with a program of resource development, has been chosen as a pilot county in the Rural Development Program. The county agent at large, Vernon Hendrickson, who has general administrative responsibility, reports that leadership is organized into an executive committee with subcommittees on agriculture, forestry, education, industry, health, and welfare. As initial action, these subcommittees will formulate basic planning goals in their fields of responsibility. Price County people are concerned about the large proportion of farms with low gross earnings, and the continuing loss of population, over 11 percent since 1940.

Tennessee, Pilot Counties Report At a conference on the Rural Development Program, February 15 in Nashville, pilot county leaders reported on conditions in their counties and the basic objectives of a practical program to raise living standards there. In each county more off-the-farm income opportunities are needed, and vocational training in non-agricultural skills should be available for the children. The counties reported plans to increase farm income through new farm enterprises, better practices, increased efficiency, and more vigorous marketing. In presenting their plan, Hardin County leaders remarked that success of the Rural Development Program will largely depend on (1) local leadership, (2) an intense desire to improve people's welfare, and (3) "the fact that the program is an outgrowth of local needs and desires and democratically formulated decisions."

Arkansas, Program Planning Organization for program leadership in all three of the State's pilot counties is going forward, and in two counties several planning meetings have taken place. Representatives of agencies and groups outside agriculture have been invited to take part in county programs. At a meeting February 12, State Rural Development Committee members discussed the role of the Rural Economics and Sociology Department at the State University in survey and research work supporting the program.

South Carolina, Representative Meeting Agricultural and non-agricultural agencies in the State, including social security, vocational rehabilitation, and public welfare were represented at a conference January 31 to discuss the Rural Development Program. Director of Extension, George B. Nutt, described the objectives of rural development and pointed out that the problem is to reach the large number of low-income farm families not assisted by present services. Each agency was asked to prepare a statement describing its contribution to the program in the State.

Indiana, Committee Established Representatives of more than 25 agencies, organizations, and Purdue University departments met in Lafayette, Indiana, January 23, to establish a Rural Development Committee. The group discussed selection of a pilot county in the State, and elected Dean H. J. Reed as chairman of the permanent committee.

USDA OFFICIALS PRESENT PROGRAM PLANS: During recent hearings before a Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Department of Agriculture officials testified in detail on the Rural Development Program and projected expenditures for cooperative Federal-State services in fiscal 1957. This brief summary is taken from the report of the hearings published by the Subcommittee.

The Director of the Federal Extension Service, Clarence M. Ferguson, submitted a general plan of operation under the Rural Development Program. If funds are appropriated for special Extension Service aid, extra personnel will be placed in a limited number of demonstration counties where they will help local people determine goals and administer an appropriate plan of rural development. The special county staff would work under direction of the county agent and the State director of Extension.

Production conditions on many small farms are not adjusted to changing technology, according to Dr. Sherman Johnson, Director of Farm and Land Management Research, Agricultural Research Service, who testified on his agency's proposed role in the program. "The fact that large numbers of farm families have not been able to make the adjustments required to improve their income emphasizes the need

for research focused on the management, adjustment, and credit problems of small farmers," he said. This special research would provide information for agricultural agencies in guiding action to improve incomes, especially in States with Rural Development Programs.

The Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, Oris V. Wells, submitted a statement to the Subcommittee requesting funds for his agency's work in the program, including studies on markets for farm products produced in low-income areas and studies of underemployed manpower. He also described cooperative research with State experiment stations and other Federal and State agencies which would produce needed information on living standards of older small farmers, and health, education, and employment skills in areas of low income.

In testifying on a plan to develop special information materials for use in the Rural Development Program, Lyle Webster, Director of the USDA Office of Information, said typical publications for farmers have not always been able to reach families with very low incomes and there is a need for these specialized materials.

In addition to these presentations before the Subcommittee, which are continuing, the Departments of Agriculture and Labor have submitted statements describing the Rural Development Program to other committees and interested members of Congress. No final action on Departmental requests is expected for several weeks.

Legislation was also introduced to broaden lending authority of the Farmers Home Administration. One of the proposed changes would permit the agency to make real estate and operating loans to farmers on smaller than family-type farms, including farmers who supplement their income with other work. Under present legislation, the FHA may not assist such farmers.

FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS STRESS COORDINATED PROGRAM PLANNING: Federal departments concerned in the Rural Development Program have increased activity in recent weeks to bring about better coordination of Federal participation in the program and make sure regional offices and State agencies are kept informed of program operations going forward under State agricultural leadership.

Department of Agriculture: Under Secretary True D. Morse and other USDA representatives have met with several State leaders in the Rural Development Program to review plans and progress to date. Under Secretary Morse addressed a Tennessee Rural Development Conference in mid-February at which pilot county leaders reported on their programs. Theodore S. Gold, Assistant to the Under Secretary, addressed Indiana leaders at a meeting which established a State committee. And Charles A. Sheffield, Extension Service Field Agent for the South-eastern States, Dr. Charles E. Kellogg, Assistant Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, and W. S. Swingler, Assistant Chief of the Forest Service, met with Rural Development Program leaders in several Southeastern States to discuss operations under the program, increased coordination with Federal agencies, and participation of non-agricultural State agencies. Three USDA representatives addressed the annual Farmers' Institute and Leaders Training Conference at West Virginia State College, February 13. The conference this year centered on rural development and action proposed by the Department of Agriculture.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: In mid-February this Department brought its nine regional directors to Washington and scheduled a meeting on the Rural Development Program. Under Secretary Morse met with the group to review the problems and challenges of the program. The regional directors described

activities within their region and emphasized the importance to State programs of early participation by State health, education, welfare, and vocational rehabilitation agencies. They also discussed suggestions for developing a reporting system to assure a flow of information from local areas through States to the Department of Agriculture and other interested Federal agencies.

Commerce Department: Guy E. Wyatt, Director of the Office of Field Services has sent a memorandum to all field offices of the Department explaining objectives of rural development work in the States and urging their full cooperation. He also describes efforts of the Office of Area Development in Commerce to foster cooperation between State groups directing rural area development and State planning and development agencies concerned with industrialization.

Representatives of these State planning and development agencies met early in March at the Commerce Department to review economic and industrial development in the States and actions of the Department to assist in this work. In a speech before the group, Under Secretary Morse described the Rural Development Program and the vital need for increased industry in many rural areas. He said industry leaders have found that farm people make excellent workers because of the mechanical skills necessary in operating their farms.

The Bureau of the Census has completed tabulating 1954 census of agriculture data, and almost all county and State reports of general characteristics have been issued. The Agriculture Division in Census will furnish a special tabulation of information on agriculture and population by township to those leaders in pilot counties who request such a tabulation. This information should prove especially helpful in planning programs and evaluating progress. Write Ray Hurley, Chief, Division of Agriculture, Bureau of the Census, Washington 25, D. C.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT IN PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC REPORT: In his annual Economic Report to the Congress, published early in January, President Eisenhower devotes considerable attention to the plight of localities that have not shared in the general prosperity of recent years and to the program suggested by Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson, for the development of agriculture's human resources. "Precisely because good times have spread so widely among the American people," says the report, "we should give serious thought to ways and means of extending prosperity to the less flourishing sectors of our economy."

Referring to the Rural Development Program, the report describes it as a long-run cooperative undertaking to help farm families in the low-income range improve their earning power. "Most of these farmers do not contribute appreciably to farm marketings or benefit from price supports," the report states. "Some are small-scale commercial farmers who come under price support programs, especially for cotton and tobacco, but their incomes have been low even when farm prices have been highest. While the Rural Development Program cannot yield substantial results quickly, it is of high importance as a means of developing agriculture's human resources."

"The program rests on two basic principles. First, lasting improvement can be achieved only by increasing the productive capacities of individuals and by enlarging the economic base of rural communities. Second, cooperation of Federal and State agencies, as well as of local and private groups, is essential for success."

Besides a detailed description of the program, only part of which is quoted here, the President's Economic Report refers to other proposed services and government and private activities that would help "broaden the base of prosperity." These include increased credit and technical aid for area industrialization; expanded programs of vocational rehabilitation; measures to advance the welfare of older persons, including more complete social security coverage; a cooperative Federal-State school building program.